

# The Goat that Laughed and Wept





## About Jātaka Stories



Chronicled in the Sutta Piṭaka of the Tipiṭaka (the Pāli Canon), the Jātakas are a collection of 547 stories about the Buddha's past lives. In previous births, the Buddha was known as the Bodhisatta (Buddha-to-be). The Bodhisatta's great compassion and deep wisdom is displayed throughout these inspirational stories. These are also incredible stories of growth and development as the Bodhisatta cultivated the Ten Pāramīs (Great Qualities & Perfections) in tremendous ways. Life after life He selflessly gave all things including His life, limbs and all belongings to accumulate the requisites for Buddhahood.

In these Jātakas stories, many characters that are associated with the Bodhisatta also appeared during the Buddha's time. After countless eons of growing and cultivating the Ten Pāramīs, the Bodhisatta took his final rebirth in Lumbini, Nepal in 563 BCE as Prince Siddhattha. Later at the age of thirty-five, He became the Buddha, the fully Self-Enlightened One.

The Buddha taught the Four Noble Truths and Noble Eightfold Path to devas (heavenly beings) and people all over the Indian subcontinent. His boundless love and wisdom helped so many on the spiritual path to inner peace and happiness. Many of his disciples would also develop psychic powers, deep wisdom and attain Nibbāna (enlightenment, end of all suffering and rebirth, the highest everlasting happiness).

Each Jātaka story includes 3 parts:

1. The story of the present (during the Buddha's time)
2. The story of the past (during the Buddha's previous rebirths as the Bodhisatta)
3. The "birth identification" (when the Buddha connects the people in the past life story to the people in the present life)

With these inspirational stories, the Buddha shows how to apply great wholesome powers in daily life and the path to Nibbāna (ultimate happiness). All of us have hope to change and improve. With the Buddha's gradual training, each person can begin at one's own level and continue to improve in spiritual healing, growth and happiness. Enjoy!

## DEDICATION

To all children around the world

*May these stories inspire great compassion, wisdom, and hope for the present and future generations.*

*May these stories give Dhamma strength for the welfare and happiness of all children.*

## THANK YOU

To the Saṅgha Venerables, Sayalays, lay devotees, and volunteers who have helped with retelling, proofreading, consulting, illustrating, typesetting, printing, and publishing these Jātaka Picture Books.

*May all wholesome wishes be fulfilled! Sādhū! Sādhū! Sādhū!*

## PUBLISHING INFORMATION

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However, misrepresentation of the contents must be avoided. The derivative copies must be in accordance with the Tipiṭaka (the Pāli Canon). In the retelling process, we strove to retain the originality, essence and moral lessons as told by the Buddha recorded in the Tipiṭaka and Commentaries.

Unless otherwise stated, the sources for the Jātaka Picture Books mainly came from the translated Jātaka stories by Prof. E. B. Cowell and his team (1895-1907), and were minorly cross-checked against Pāli Dictionary and Pāli experts.

Please check the website below for the latest edition before reprinting.

## A GIFT OF DHAMMA – NOT FOR SALE



This series of books are available for download on the website of Wikipali at  
<https://bit.ly/wikipali-elibrary> (ENGLISH>Jātaka Stories)  
Email: [paukdhammaseed@gmail.com](mailto:paukdhammaseed@gmail.com)



Jātaka 18: Matakabhatta-Jātaka

# The Goat that Laughed and Wept

*"If people ever knew" -- A goat which was  
about to be killed, both laughed and cried.  
Why did the goat act so strangely?*



*Illustrated by Sucittā & Sunīta  
Reviewed by Ken & Visākhā Kawasaki  
Typeset by Jude*

It was while staying at Jetavana that the Buddha told this story about a Feast for the Dead.

At one time, people were killing the goats, sheep and other animals, and offering them to their departed relatives.

It was a religious ritual called a Feast for the Dead. Seeing what they were doing, the bhikkhus asked the Buddha:-

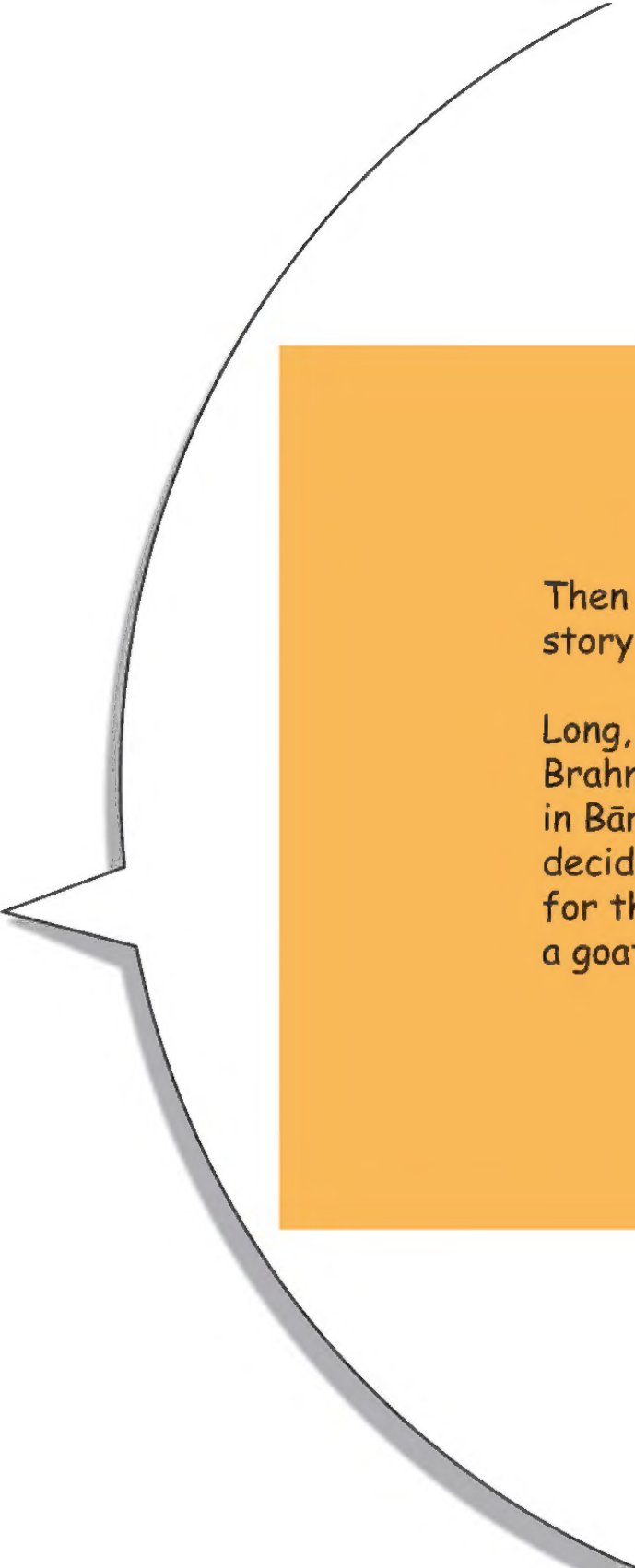
Master, is there any benefit in sacrificing goats, sheep, and other animals as offerings for departed relatives?

No, bhikkhus.  
No good ever comes from taking life, not even when it is for the purpose of providing a Feast for the Dead.

In a previous time, the wise, preaching the Truth in mid-air, showed the evil consequences of the practice and made the whole country abandon it.

But now, their minds have become confused, and the practice has revived.






Then the Buddha told this  
story of the past.

Long, long ago, when  
Brahmadatta was reigning  
in Bārānasī, a brahmin  
decided to offer a Feast  
for the Dead and bought  
a goat to sacrifice.





My boys, take this  
goat down to the river,  
bathe it, brush it,  
hang a garland around  
its neck, give it some  
grain to eat, and  
bring it back.

Yes, sir.

They led the goat to the  
river and bathed it.





As they were hanging a  
garland around its neck,

the goat started to laugh with  
a sound like a pot smashing.

Then, just as strangely,  
it started to weep loudly.

**HAAH!**  
**HA! HA! HA!**



**WUHUU~**  
**HUUH!**





Friend goat,  
why did you  
suddenly laugh?

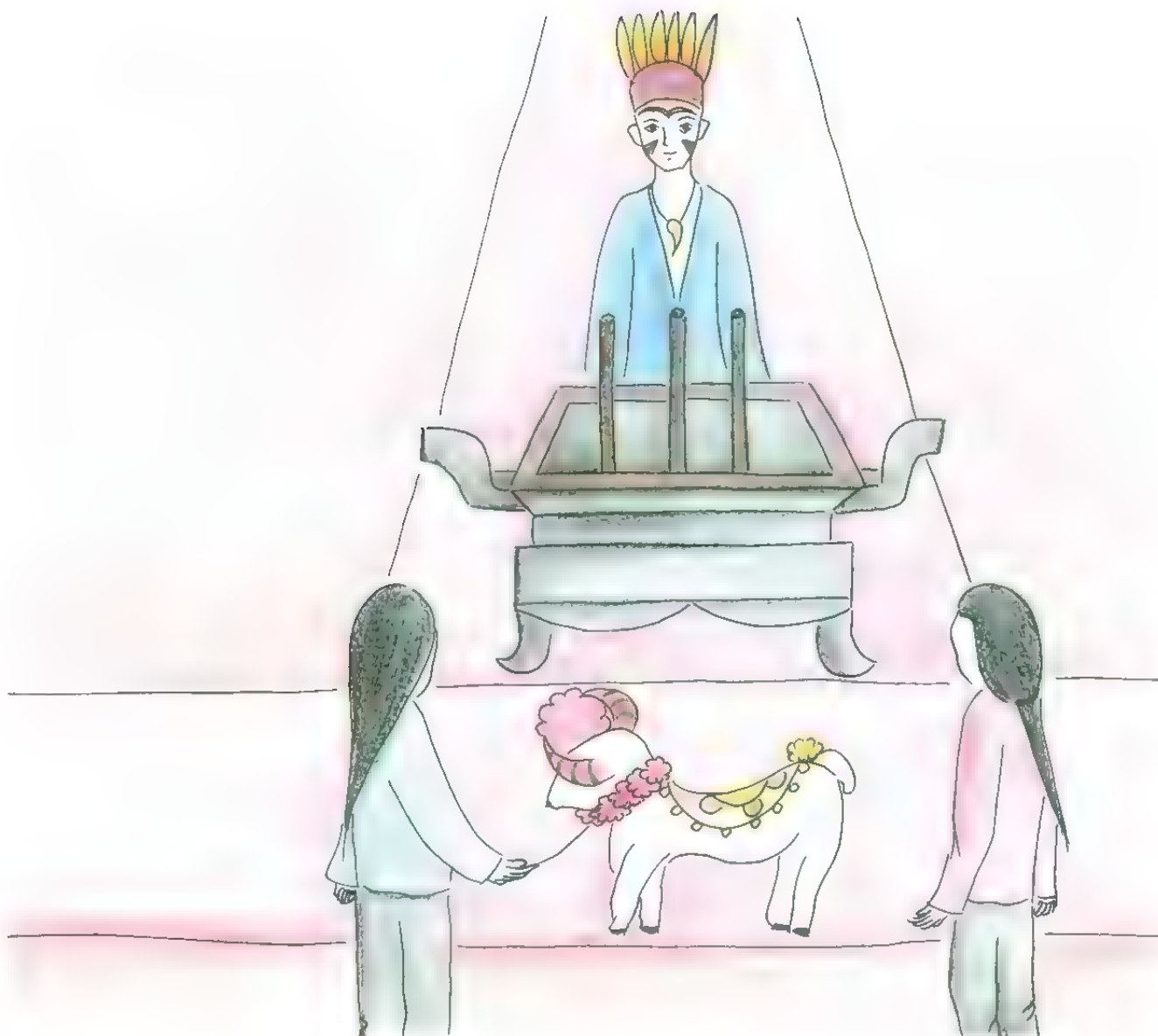
And why do you  
now cry so loudly?

Repeat your question  
when we get back to  
your teacher.



The students hurriedly took the goat back to their master and told him what had happened at the river.

Hearing the story, the master himself asked the goat why it had laughed and why it had wept.





**What made me laugh?**

In times past, Brahmin, I was a  
brahmin who taught the Vedas like you.

I, too, sacrificed a goat as an offering  
for a Feast for the Dead.

Because of killing that single goat, I have  
had my head cut off four hundred and  
ninety-nine times.

I laughed aloud when I realized that this is my  
last birth as an animal to be sacrificed.

Today, I will be  
freed from my misery.



**And, what made me cry?**  
On the other hand, I cried when I  
realized that, because of killing me, you,  
too, would be doomed to lose your head  
five hundred times.

**It was out of compassion  
for you that I cried.**

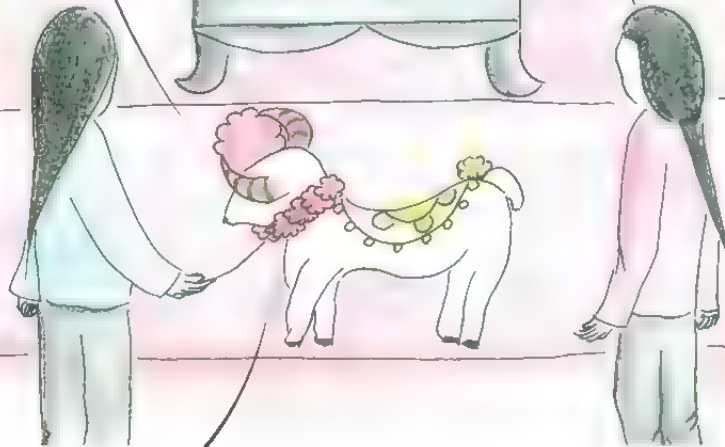


Well, goat,  
in that case,  
I am not going  
to kill you.

Brahmin!  
Whether or not you  
kill me, I cannot escape  
death today.

Don't worry,  
goat. I will  
protect you.

You don't understand.  
Your protection is weak.  
The force of my evil  
deed is very strong.



The brahmin untied the goat and said to his students,  
"Don't allow anyone to harm  
this goat."

They obediently followed the  
animal to protect it.



After the goat was freed, it began to graze.

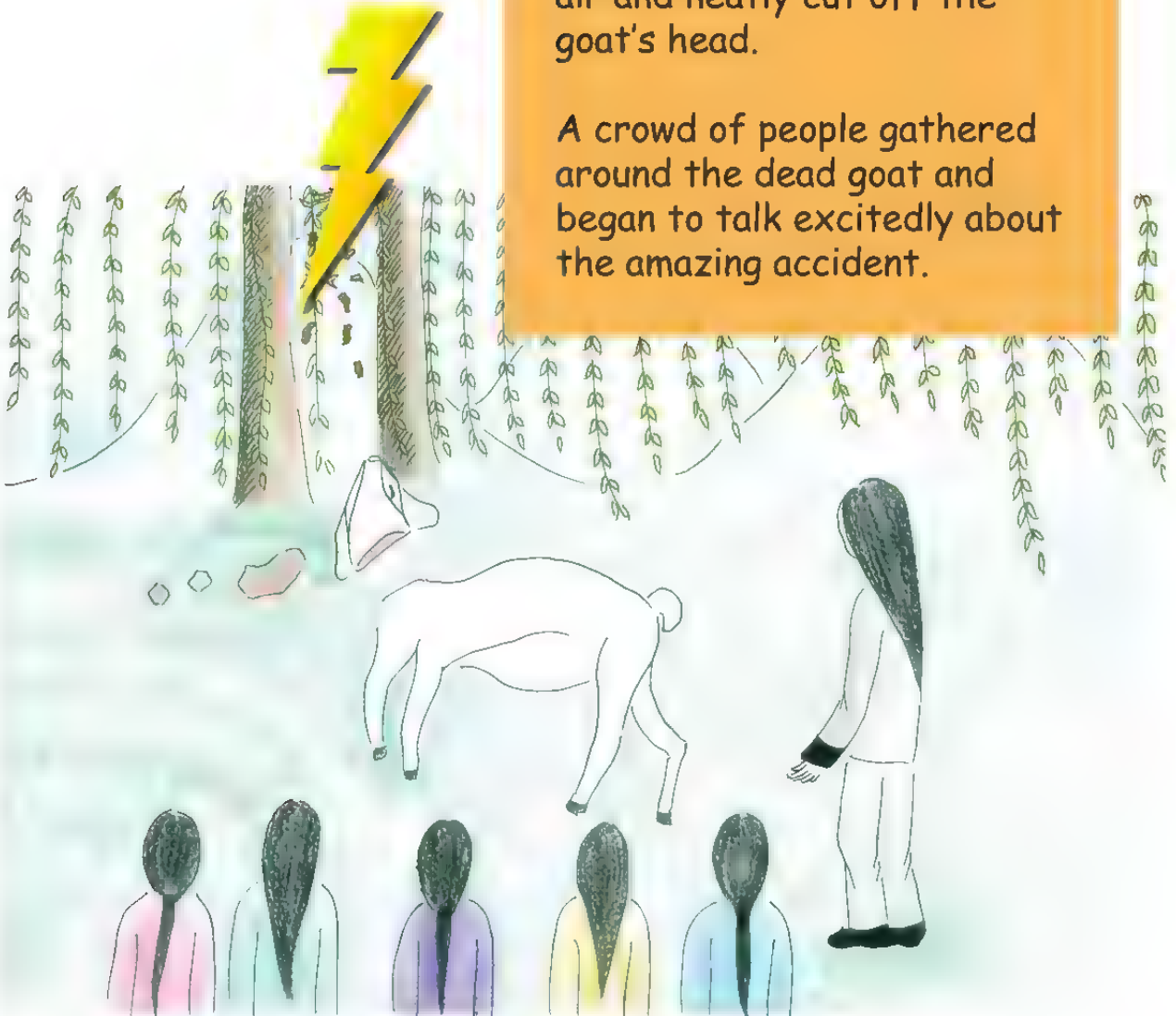
It stretched out its neck to reach the leaves on a bush growing near the top of a large rock.





At that very instant, a lightning bolt hit the rock, breaking off a sharp piece of stone, which flew through the air and neatly cut off the goat's head.

A crowd of people gathered around the dead goat and began to talk excitedly about the amazing accident.

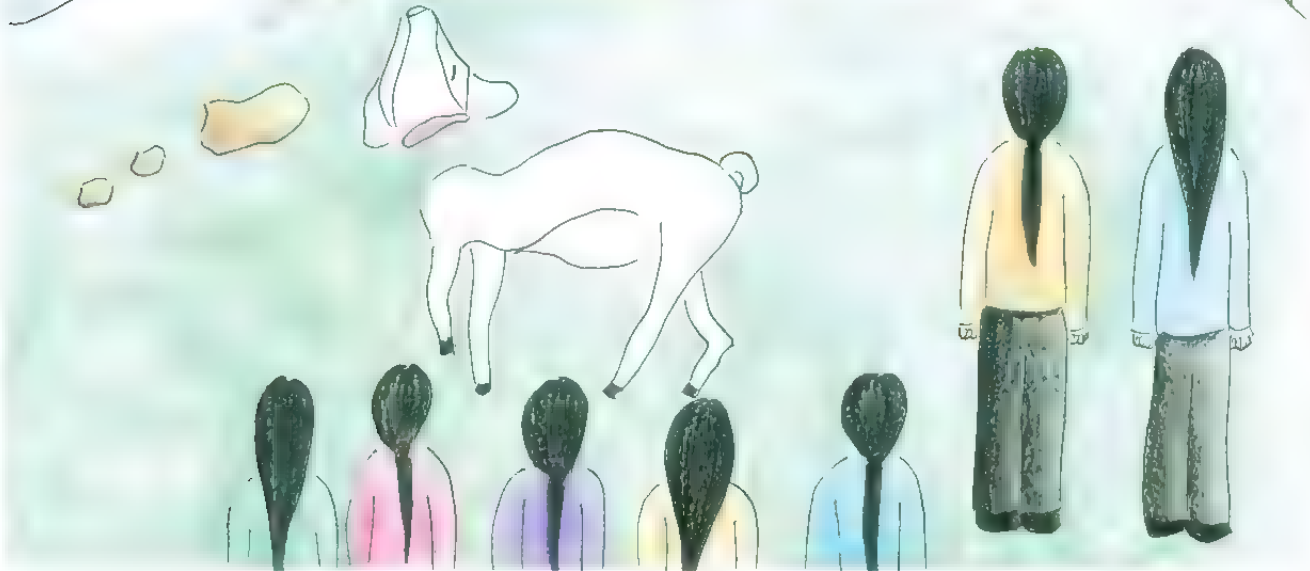
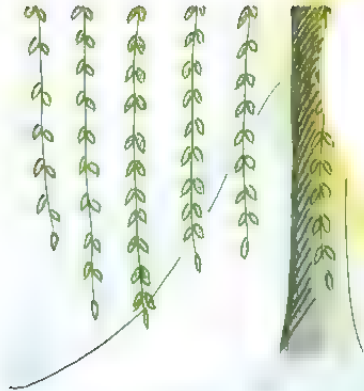
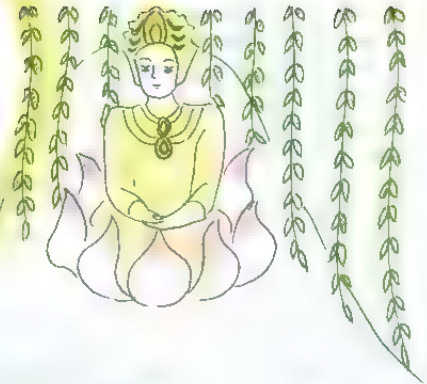


In those days, the Bodhisatta had been born as a tree deva in that same spot.

He had observed everything from the goat's purchase to its dramatic death, and, drawing a lesson from the incident, admonished the crowd.

He seated himself cross-legged in mid-air, and, in his sweet voice, proclaimed:

If people only knew  
that the penalty would be  
rebirth into sorrow,  
they would cease from taking life.  
A horrible doom awaits  
one who slays.



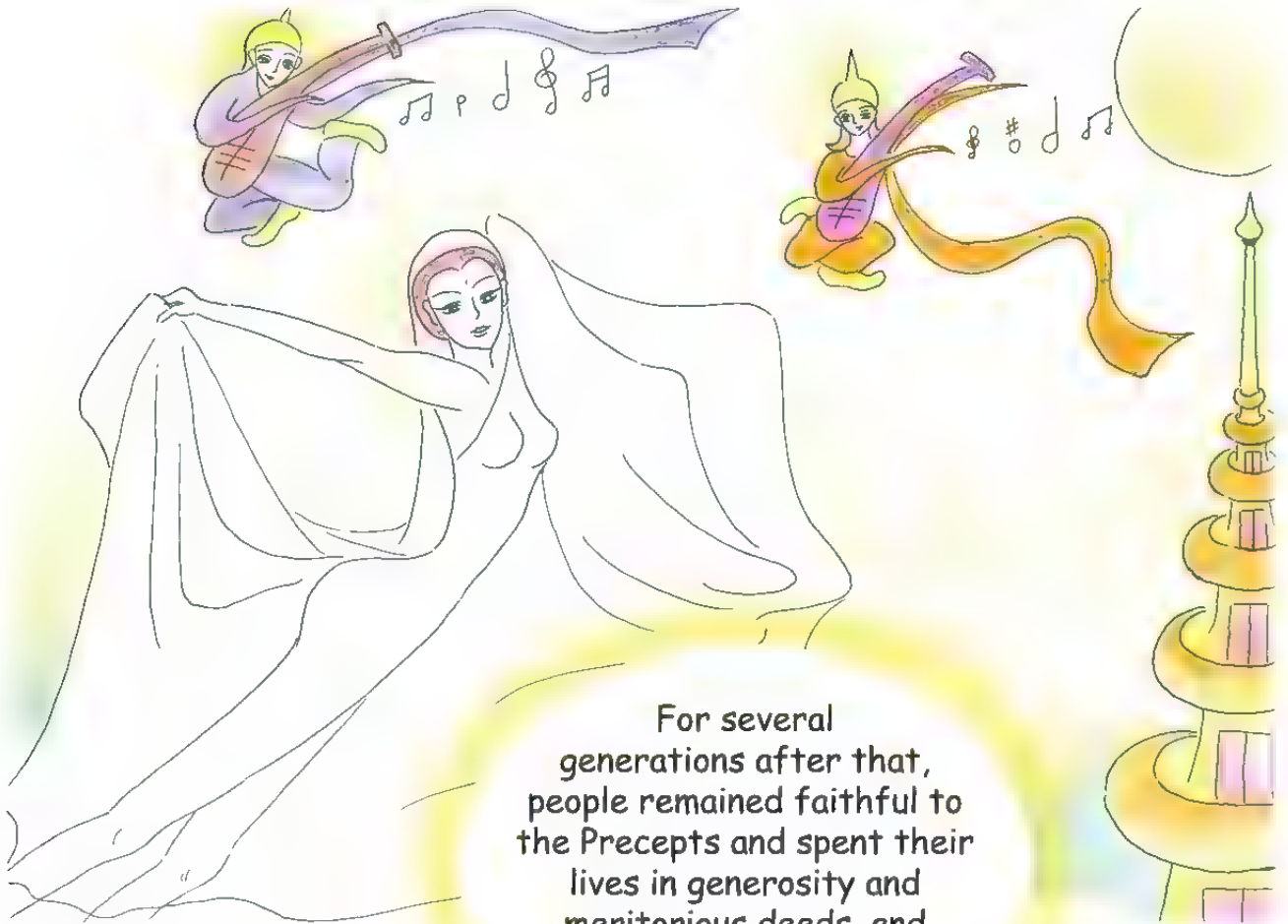
With this explanation of the Law of Kamma, the Bodhisatta instilled in his listeners the fear of hell.

The people were so frightened that they completely gave up the practice of animal sacrifices.

The Bodhisatta further instructed the people in the Five Precepts and urged them to do good.

Eventually, the Bodhisatta passed away according to his kamma.

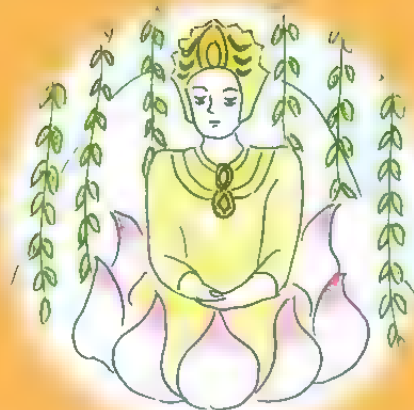




For several generations after that, people remained faithful to the Precepts and spent their lives in generosity and meritorious deeds, and many were reborn in heaven.

Having concluded his story,  
the Buddha identified the birth:

"At that time,  
I was that tree deva."





The End

## Glossary

**Brahmin:** A member of the highest caste of Hinduism in India. Brahmins are priests or teachers who are responsible for protecting and keeping alive the sacred learning of the ancient texts. The three other castes are warriors, traders, and laborers.

**Bodhisatta:** Is the Buddha-to-be, prophesized by another Buddha.

**Deva:** A deity; a god or heavenly being.

**Doomed:** Destined

**Feast:** A large and special meal to celebrate something.

**Five Precepts:** These are five moral rules which everyone should follow:

1. To abstain from destroying life or killing a living being
2. To abstain from stealing
3. To abstain from sexual misconduct
4. To abstain from false speech or lying
5. To abstain from taking or using anything that causes intoxication or heedlessness

**Kamma:** Action. There are of three kinds of kamma: bodily kamma (kāya-kamma), verbal kamma (vacī-kamma), and mental kamma (mano-kamma). We create kamma through intentions (cetanā), that can be wholesome or unwholesome. When there are suitable conditions, these kamma will cause future results. Wholesome kamma will cause good results (vipāka) and rebirths in a good destination. While unwholesome kamma will cause bad results and rebirths in a bad destination.

**Vedas:** Ancient scriptures of Hinduism containing sacred knowledge and learning.

## **T**eacher Guide

**P**lease note that this list (of questions) is a guide for teachers, to evaluate the student's understanding and to promote interaction between students relating to the story.

**Before you start to tell this story, perhaps these motivational questions may help prompt students with their thinking:**

- When faced with the danger of life, we all try to protect ourselves, friends or family.
- How do people protect their lives? Living in a concrete house? Hiring security guards? Migrating to other countries?
- Have you heard about people who slaughter animals for the purpose of worship in order to protect their own lives? Why do they practise this type of culture?
- In this coming story, a goat, who laughed and cried before being killed for sacrifice. What happened? [Tell the story]

**After the story telling or reading, here are some questions for reflection:**

### **General**

1. How do you feel after listening to this story? (share your feeling or opinion)
2. Why did the goat cry?

### **Protection of Life**

3. Why do people have the idea that their lives will be protected by slaughtering animals for sacrifice?
4. Now, do you realise what is the real protection of our lives?

### **The Lessons Tips:**

1. How do we gain the protection of life? Every cause will have its effect; this is the Law of Nature. If we wish for wholesome effects, we should cultivate the correct causes of giving protection and save



the lives of other beings by our deeds. For example, we should avoid dangerous conditions, be mindful in our actions, no matter how small the act. This includes saving ants from the toilet bowl, walking mindfully to avoid stepping on ants, or protecting others from fear.

2. Do you have a wish? Everyone makes wishes, either for themselves or on behalf of others. However, the majority of wishes have happiness as essence, and are not to encounter sufferings.
3. Life is known to be suffering, either mentally or physically. One who cause suffering towards other beings is bound to receive the effects of the unwholesomeness in ones future.
4. The Causes and Effects  
Every cause will produce its effect(s). Each deed, either by speech, action or mind, whether is kusala or akusala, will definitely produce its effects undoubtedly, only to arise when there is conducive condition(s).

Buddha once said, bad deed is like a spoon of salt, when put into a cup of water, the cup of water is very salty. But when a spoon of salt is thrown into the Ganges River, the cup of water from the Ganges River becomes drinkable. Thus, no matter what bad deeds one has done, one should refrain from repeating them or have regrets, instead, one should cultivate more good deeds to add to one's string of kamma.

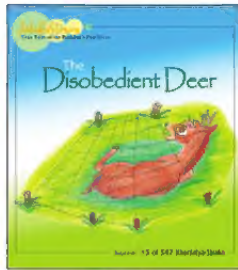
5. It is rare that one attains a human birth. Hence, it is important that we protect our own lives.

#### **Our next theme -- Right View**

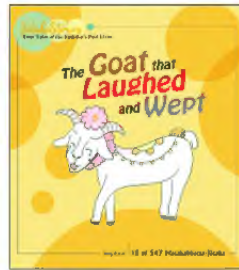
Often we hear these questions - 'How do we differentiate between right or wrong views, and right or wrong acts?', 'How true is our understanding on right and wrong views?' (Please read up the upcoming Jātaka picture book: Jātaka 322 - The Sound the Hare Heard).



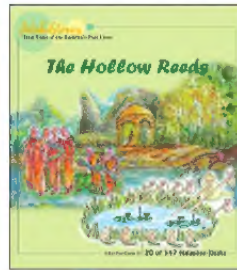
The Jātaka Picture Books are retold in simple English and Chinese contains four levels of readability: Beginner, Intermediate I, Intermediate II and Advanced. The Beginner and Intermediate I levels are suitable for primary school students, while Intermediate II and Advanced levels are suitable for high school students and above. The eBooks can be downloaded from <https://bit.ly/wikipali-elibrary> (ENGLISH>Jātaka Stories).



**Jātaka 15:**  
*Unwillingness to learn  
essential things*



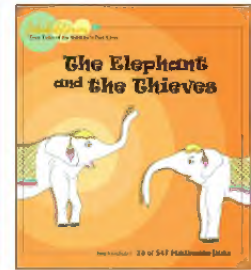
**Jātaka 18:**  
*Importance of  
abstaining from killing*



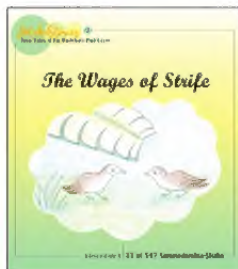
**Jātaka 20:**  
*Truthfulness, leadership*



**Jātaka 22:**  
*The dangers of lying and  
anger, the power of love,  
virtue and courage*



**Jātaka 26:**  
*Poor judgement,  
unwise association*



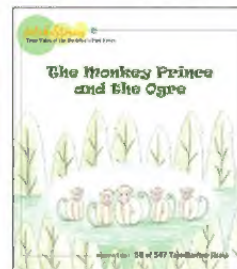
**Jātaka 33:**  
*Divisive speech, the  
power of unity*



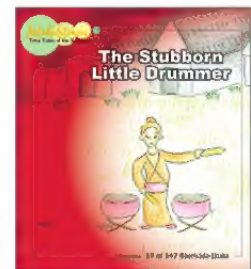
**Jātaka 43:**  
*Dangerous stubbornness*



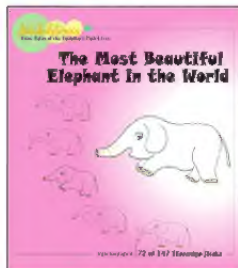
**Jātaka 55:**  
*Determination, brave  
effort*



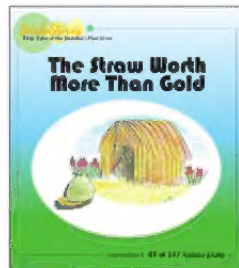
**Jātaka 58:**  
*Wisdom, courage and  
skill*



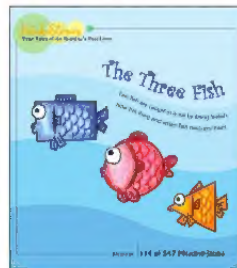
**Jātaka 59:**  
*Stubbornness and  
downfall*



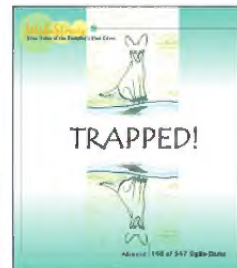
**Jātaka 72:**  
*Unconditional giving and  
loving-kindness, ingratitude*



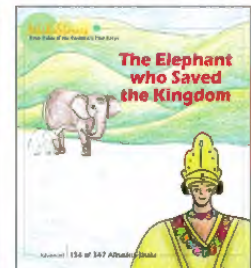
**Jātaka 89:**  
*Cheating, stealing and  
lying, wise association*



**Jātaka 114:**  
*The perils of laziness,  
saved by the wise*



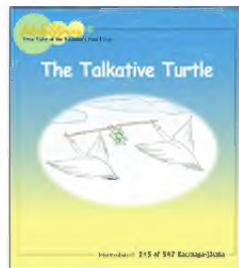
**Jātaka 148:**  
*The dangers of  
gluttony*



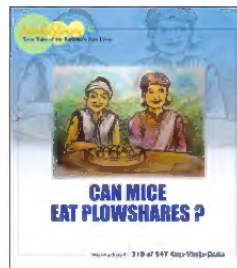
**Jātaka 156:**  
*The power of gratitude,  
duty and valor*



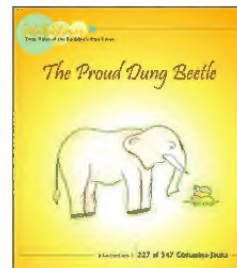
**Jātaka 168:**  
*Quick wittedness saves  
the day, advantageous  
environments*



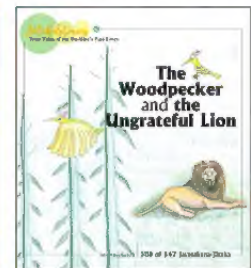
**Jātaka 215:**  
*The dangers of angry  
speech and over-speaking*



**Jātaka 218:**  
*Cheaters never win*



**Jātaka 227:**  
*The dangers of alcohol*



**Jātaka 308:**  
*Ingrates lose good  
friendships*



## **Protection of one's own life**

**I**n this story, we learned not to hurt or kill other beings, as killing brings about unwholesome causes and effects; this is the Law of Nature.

**Is the effect of hurting or killing ourselves good or bad? Definitely, the answer is bad.**

**If our last thought before death is unwholesome, where do you think it will lead us? Can we be reborn as a human or in the heavenly realm? No, the unwholesome last moment thought will land us in woeful realms. If we wish to gain happiness, it is important to abandon the ignorance of killing one's own self or others as a means to solve problems. Cultivate meditation, when one progress to the stage of seeing Dependent Origination, one will be able to see the causes and effects of rebirths; you will be able to see what caused your human birth; and you will realise that the effect of reborn in wholesome realms were causes of wholesome mind and the effect of reborn in woeful realms were causes of unwholesome mind; You will understand that whatever is happening now is due to the past causes. As a result, you will be mindful as you react to challenges in life with a wholesome mind and create wholesome causes as much as possible.**